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SOIL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Conference

Devoted to Improving Ontario's Crops

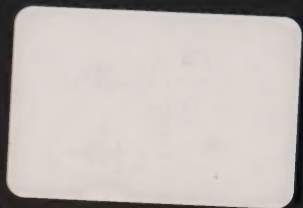
LAND USE CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 12-13
1972

Proceedings

CASE STUDY REPORTS

- I - REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
- II - COUNTY OF HURON
- III - REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA



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CASE STUDY I
THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
OBSERVER-CHAIRMAN - W.E. TOSSELL

The focal point for this discussion group was the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton which has existed since 1969. This municipality resulted from the amalgamation of 14 municipalities of Carleton County, one township of Russell County and the City of Ottawa, and has a population of 466,000, including 300,000 in the City of Ottawa. It is a planned area with provision made for urban purposes, an agricultural production industry and recreation. It is unique in having a 44,300 acres of land accumulated by land purchase to develop a Green Belt.

Discussions moved rapidly from a focus on the Ottawa-Carleton area to the general picture for Ontario. This occurred because the problems and considerations of real significance to this specific area were essentially the same problems and considerations for the whole of Ontario. Our observer team identified a number of items that we would like to list as our main observations.

1. The farmers interest in planning policies for land

The farmer is in a unique position and has a special interest in land planning policies. He is interested in land for two main purposes.

(a) Land is used in his business. He must have access to land for his business of producing agricultural products: meat, milk, fruit, vegetables, industrial crops, etc. As such he must be concerned with having land available for this purpose at a cost that is reasonable to absorb in the cost of production of his product. It was interesting that there was relatively little discussion on this aspect of land and the possible effects of land use planning on the agricultural production process. Was this because it was taken for granted that land is needed for this purpose and that land planning would automatically take this into account? If so, it is our feeling that it is dangerous to take for granted such an important issue. It seems important that agriculture set out and continuously review in the planning process its objectives for an agricultural industry in Ontario and the land needs to meet these objectives.

(b) Land as an investment. The farmer in Ontario generally does not consider obtaining access to land for his business through a rental arrangement. He normally owns the land. The result is that land is an important avenue for investment for a farmer--more so than is the case for other Ontario residents on the average. Therefore, land planning policy will affect not only the farmer's business (agricultural production), but his personal investment (land). The discussions seemed to focus largely on the effects of land planning on the investment aspect of land. This is understandable because of the great appreciation in land values experienced in many areas in recent years and the projection for more of the same.

These two different aspects of the farmer's interest in land must be kept in mind in dealing with land planning. In certain instances these aspects will be in conflict and therefore a compromise is required. Farmers now holding land want to participate as fully as is reasonable in the returns from land appreciation, but we sense that they are willing to compromise where it is absolutely necessary in order to assure the availability of land for a healthy agriculture in the future.

There is a third interest that farmers have in rural property. Most farmers have their homes on the farm and are rightly concerned that planning policies should not create problems for them in maintaining a home at retirement. For example, the farmer who wishes to retire in an urban area would like to be assured that appreciation on his farm home will not be hindered by the land planning operation. He will need that appreciation to look after purchase of the home in an area where there has been no constraint on appreciation.

2. Government must take the lead in land planning

Problems such as urban sprawl, ribbon development, location of housing near established animal units, provision of greater services, were raised in many groups. Apparently those who buy and use former agricultural land are not able to do the planning necessary; apparently those who sell the agricultural land are not able to do the planning necessary; and apparently the small local municipalities are too often not able to do the planning necessary. It appears that the lead must

be taken by provincial government to develop the planning process at the provincial and regional levels and to involve the municipalities and citizens in the process.

It would not be realistic to feel that those who now own most of the land under discussion (the farmers) should be the primary group responsible for seeing that a good land planning process is developed. Farmer land owners have an important stake in land planning but are not the only ones with a great stake in land policy. The main final users now concerned with non-urban land are:

- a) Farmers - full time. Their neighbours are changing. They are using land for their business of agricultural production. They have a heavy investment in land.
- b) Farmers - part time. They are in rural Ontario because they like the environment for living. They maintain the land as a unit--in a sense a land bank for future full-time farming if needed. They have an investment in land.
- c) Rural smallholders. They are in rural Ontario because they like the life style that can be developed in the country. The land they own is out of agriculture.
- d) Urban people. They need recreation space, transportation and service space and they need food.

All of these people as citizens of the Province have a right to a fair share of the resources, including land, of the Province and hence all have a stake in and should have a voice in land planning.

An interesting side observation is that all is not in complete harmony in the rural area. There are stresses resulting from the different groups living together in rural Ontario. It appears that additional effort should be made to understand these stresses and how the objectives of each group can be met and stress reduced. As in most situations, communication needs improvement.

3. The group is in favour of land-use planning

All groups present--farmers, municipal officials and those providing services--seemed to agree that a system of land-use planning is essential. A system of no controls was unacceptable. One group in which a vote was taken came down unanimously in favour of the need for land-use planning.

4. Implementing the process is the problem

Most feel that planning is essential. The problem arises when the plan might adversely affect the land holding of an individual. We are all in favour of planning in general, but would prefer freedom of action with our holding! However, we detected a healthy attitude in which reasonable constraints would be acceptable for the common and for the long-term good.

We also detected that farmers want to be assured that land-use planning and the process is soundly worked out and that it will be fair before it is implemented. Some uneasiness clearly exists as the result of other major changes recently introduced, or being introduced, into Ontario which have changed structures.


5. Participation in planning

One of the conference objectives was to inform this group on the issue of land planning. The need for such an objective was verified. There is need for more information describing the planning process itself, the exact status of planning in Ontario, the existing instruments that bear on land planning, the alternative systems that could be used to control land, etc. The conference helped to inform but there is a great need to continue with this objective of improving the level of information available to those who should be involved in the planning process. People with such information will make a greater contribution to planning.

There was concern expressed that farmers are not adequately involved in the process of land planning as it is currently underway in the regions and municipalities. There appears to be opportunity for involvement in terms of meetings that are called but attendance at the meetings is low and participation low. The conclusion must be that farmers and agriculturalists want to be involved, that planners

want them involved, but that a better mechanism is needed to promote and develop this involvement. It was suggested that both individual farmers and farm organizations have a role to play and that they should give thought to further development of their roles.

In summary it was apparent that a positive and constructive note existed throughout the discussions and in fact throughout the entire conference. The conference is a part of the land planning process and as such played a significant role in focusing attention on the area of planning and on some of the concerns of the farmers who have a major stake in land use decisions.



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CASE STUDY II
HURON COUNTY
OBSERVER - CHAIRMAN - E. G. PLEVA

I am very pleased to be here. I have divided this into four parts - general observations, some special development problems, the meetings themselves, and a conclusion. First of all, the general observation. Huron County is the first county in Ontario to undertake a comprehensive planning program on a pattern geared to the 1970's. I say that so that some people will not refer to some sporadic things that were undertaken in the '50's by some counties. Their planning recognizes that the major industry is agriculture and in their planning the agricultural use of land is considered the highest category rather than something that's left over after you've spotted in all the high rise apartments, the car washes, and the tennis courts. The criticism that planning consultants and planners are urban oriented is being answered in Huron County. It was very interesting to see this as a process being worked out in the workshops themselves. I'd like to suggest that if positions are opened in rural and regional planning these opportunities would soon be filled by young planners, many of them coming up through the University of Guelph and who have a rural background. Certainly you wouldn't wait very long before you found that there were people who definitely were geared in to this challenge as you have accused planners today of listening only and being employed only by urban authorities. Huron County professional planners seem to have recognized the bread and butter base to Huron County and are planning for it. Planning in an agricultural area requires full knowledge of the functional basis

of land classification and land capability. Everyone concerned must learn all he can of the intellectual resources available and this applies alike to farmers, the town people, government workers. I hope you won't think I'm out of order but I think quite a few people in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food could learn a lot more about what has gone on in the last few decades regarding the technology of land classification and land use and certainly the elected and appointed members, in fact, everyone. This knowledge should reach into the colleges of agricultural technology and the secondary schools and there is evidence that this is already happening in Huron County. Now the timing for Huron County planning is good. Most of the impact crises brought up in the workshops, rather interestingly, were drawn from other parts of Ontario, but things that could happen in Huron County. Now this doesn't mean that Huron County is spared of problems. It has plenty of them, but most of the ones mentioned are still manageable, especially to those of us who come from some parts of Ontario where we almost feel we've reached a point of no return in regard to problem solutions.

Now some specific developmental problems. Almost all of Huron County is Class I, II, and III land. It is a veritable garden spot, a true food bank. It really is a resource for the future in the real sense of the word. Its potential productivity must be measured against the future Ontario when most of the urban corridor is influenced by urban development. The spill out from the corridor is already felt in Huron County and already the people of the county must direct their attention to questions such as this.

Can urban development and other non rural uses such as cottages on the lakeshore, and escape estates, be rationalized without destroying the agrarian base of the county. In the London area we used to refer to the term of urban drones and rural hives. I don't know whether that would be applicable to Huron County or not. Through planning it is hoped that justifiable non agricultural uses will be so placed and encouraged that the economy of the county will be enhanced, not weakened. Towns and cities can have tidy hems rather than ragged edges. Roads can be arteries of transport rather than invitation to sprawl. Cottages can be grouped rather than becoming a string of shells one row deep closing access to the water for the land locked interland. Now something which isn't apparent in their planning but I would like to put a warning here, because of work that I'm doing in other parts of Ontario. Many industries will leap out of the corridor in the next twenty-five years. It did come up peripherally because people did say, what if a Ford plant locates in Huron County, a Ford plant type of thing. Does a new plant necessarily generate a shadow of urban uses or is it possible for workers to live in already well established towns and villages.

Now the meetings were well organized, the organization of all these meetings has been excellent and I wish to commend from where I'm standing now those people who had a part in it. The consensus of the meetings regarding Huron County was that planning was desirable and necessary. The exact definitions of planning varied, but most agreed that it involved steering development toward socially desired goals, with benefits starting now. I thought that this was important. Not some benefits in some vague

future, but now. And hence, planning to be realistic has to have some trade offs, some trade offs are inevitable. These have to be rationalized by the elected councils and decision makers, now this is, provided the people are involved in these decisions that are being made. I mean that these decisions are not being made by the elected representatives. The time scale came up as being important, but it is a moving target, we all agreed on this, and it's like driving from Goderich to Exeter. You want to go to Exeter, but you don't just set your course for Exeter by going across fields and so on. You have to follow the road, and although your goal is Exeter you have to plan for the next 100 yards or as far as you can see ahead as you drive the car, and planning has this kind of a dimension its constantly renewing.

Now it seems to me from what I heard spoken at this platform, that the ball was in the province's side of the court, and an official plan for Ontario is necessary. Even if this merely states specifically how the province will handle its regional responsibilities. Most of us I imagine, from what we heard yesterday, feel that this development is close at hand. Now naturally, those localities or counties already embarked on planning will be better able to reconcile and co-ordinate with the sovereign thrust from above. The province has many responsibilities in planning that only it can handle, but it cannot delegate or expect to be handled by non sovereign governments. Now everyone, not only those in Huron County, but again I gathered this from the meetings, everyone of us must understand better what an official plan really is. The relationship of the official plan to land use control regulations is

critically important. It is specifically set out in Ontario, there must not be any confusion about this. The problems of keeping agriculture viable or technical as well as operational. The economics of the market place must be recognized, they came into the discussions all the time and they were covered in many various ways. Each one of them was worthy of a conference in itself, but the consensus was that as long as we were dealing with planning that solutions are possible only if the physical faces for the agricultural activities are maintained, and that's where we started with land use planning. This returns us to recognizing the real values of an agricultural resource base. The poorest quartile of Huron County land would be a Godsend to 90% of the rest of Canada. We sometimes forget this, and if you're always surrounded by perfect apples, the first time you see the slightest spot you feel like throwing it in the garbage can. Well I think that maybe that's the way many people who live in these garden spots really look upon agricultural land which on the Canadian scale is extremely valuable. Naturally Huron County implies provincial responsibilities. It is not that the people of Huron County cannot plan for their county, it is that many of the problems to be faced in the future have their origins and continuing pressures outside the county. There is a hierarchy in planning. The government of Ontario finally recognizes that its official plan is not a mosaic of all the fragmented local and regional plans, but that it really has an identity and function of its own. This Ontario plan long overdue must contain definite guidelines against which regional and local plans be placed. I compliment the people of Huron County because they have been operating in a bit of a vacuum, in a bit of darkness, but I think they have the idea

that eventually the province would come up with some kind of provincial guidelines. My last statement is this. It is essential and this is, I hope, a constructive suggestion, that it is essential that all planning operations wherever they may be carried out in Ontario have reference to the agricultural capabilities of the land being planned. An agricultural land advisory council would be reasonable, and if there is such a thing so named, give it some new powers and let it get to work. The scientific knowledge is in place and we have the necessary professional scientists to carry out this function, most of them are right in this room today. I know as I look at the various summarials suggested for our future in Ontario, that I would feel much better if I knew there was an agricultural land advisory council to which the decision makers, say if you were a county, could turn and they make their land use decisions in the next quarter century.

CASE STUDY III

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

OBSERVER-CHAIRMAN - K. M. PRETTY

I said to Dr. Tossell when we were talking about the order in which we would be discussing these this afternoon, that I was third and I felt that I didn't want to go over all the same ground again if there was going to be a certain amount of repetition. I said that I thought that the land would be ploughed and worked by that time and as someone trained in soil science I believed in minimum tillage. So I'll try to avoid going over the same areas as the two previous speakers.

As indicated, our group concentrated its ideas and main thrusts in the early part of yesterday afternoon on Niagara. And of course, as soon as we talk about the Regional Municipality of Niagara, we come up with the situation that we were talking about rather unique circumstances. Unique circumstances of soils to a degree but more particularly unique circumstances of geography and climate, which make it particularly suitable for fruit production. One rather distinct comment that was made by a gentleman in one of the discussion groups yesterday afternoon that you put in a dimension if you talk about Niagara, we seem to think these are unique problems and unique circumstances, that are not generally applicable to the Ontario province. He said there is nothing we can do about Niagara now, we just want to keep the rest of Ontario from getting in the same mess. Well perhaps this is an over simplification, but perhaps it also gives a certain dimension that the circumstances in Niagara are rather unique when we talk about it. Agriculture is

certainly important even within the Regional Municipality of Niagara because the figures we were given indicated that the fruit and vegetable production in that region is about thirty million dollars and livestock, poultry of a similar magnitude. It is probably one of the areas in the province too that was first recognized as having land pressures developing during the '50's and certainly, the area of the province where the highest values of land exist from an agricultural point of view, so that all decisions relating to that area to land use planning and other uses have strong economic overtones. Of course, when we broadened our discussion to include the rest of the province, I suppose we also recognize the economic overtones which face us in all of these decision making processes.

Another thing that surprised me and the other members of my observer team was the rather lengthy debate which ensued on the very first question which was posed to us, and that is the necessity for the continuation of agricultural production in Ontario and concomitant with that, the necessity to preserve agricultural lands. I suppose in my own mind, I took this as being something which we readily accepted but certainly it's nice to refresh ourselves and to use this as an objective from which to build, recognizing that agriculture in the province of Ontario is important and significant industry and one which needs to be maintained for a whole variety of reasons, not the least of which is something that perhaps we sometimes overlook, but as a trading nation in Canada and also a trading province, we need to have certain leverage which a base in agricultural production gives us when it comes to dealing with some of our trading partners. One of the things that Dr. Pleva mentioned and I would like to reiterate and that is, that many times we do

not fully comprehend what we're talking about when we speak of land. We talk, sometime planners talk in land in terms of the total concept rather than taking into consideration the various qualities of land. I have the feeling that some of the people in our discussion groups yesterday and this morning were not totally familiar with the terminology relating to qualities of agricultural land and perhaps this is something where communication and education need to be enhanced.

The group seemed very strong in their opinion that in developing plans, whether its for the Niagara Regional borders or any other region, the quality of the land and its capability for production must be prime considerations, not merely looking at the total land available within any particular planning area. Another idea that seemed to wend its way through some of the discussion is that we don't really know where we're starting from. If we apply this to Niagara Municipality for example, there are many existing problems which perhaps are not of the same order of magnitude or of a greater order of magnitude there than in many other parts of the province. And that we have relatively few criteria on which farm people can point to as an example of what has happened in the past or what have been the problems which have come up that point to the necessity of planning on a regional scale or on a provincial scale. If we assume a sort of vacuum then certainly we can come up with what is ideal, but giving the point in time where we are today, making plans which not only satisfy the future, but also have an impact in reconciling what is here at the present has some real meaning. A perfect example, of course, and this is something which is very real in Niagara, is the conflicts between intensive livestock operations

and urban or recreational uses of land. These might be further down the road in some areas more remote in the province, but they certainly are very real in Niagara at the present time. So that the province's problems at these various interplaces must be recognized on each side it seemed to me that the farmers were saying we do not necessarily want any high degree of preferential treatment, but we want to make sure that if guidelines and rules are established within which we must live, then these same guidelines and same rules must be applicable to the remainder of society or upon the urban side or within the rural non farm sector.

One of the things that also was evident within our group is that alternatives to our present system of ownership have not been considered and at this point in time if I am reading the farmers correctly, it's not likely to be considered as being factors involved in the possibility of total planning. The intrusion of non agricultural uses into traditionally agricultural areas is recognized as being a minor problem but I think that there was a consensus within the group that these are relatively minor compared to the problems at the rural - urban interface and also the problems of ribbon development or rural non farm residents. The thread that we ended on late yesterday afternoon was summed up by one man when he said that if farmers do not become involved, if they do not regulate themselves or permit a degree of regulation, it would seem relatively obvious that they lose by default to urbanites who some-way or another will do it for them. But, at the same time, they seem to be saying we don't want to move too far too fast. The planners must be more specific in the kinds of things that they are saying to us, that regulation as I indicated before, must be uniform

over rather broad areas so that the farmers in any one municipality have no particular advantage or disadvantage in relation to others in adjoining municipalities. They seem to say too, that we don't want if we can avoid it, stringent rules but a few guidelines or regulations within which most of us can live.

That brought us up to today, and I don't want to go into great detail, but it seemed to me there was recognition that farmers have to become more involved in planning, that this involvement can come by participation in, for example, the five regional advisory committees which were mentioned by Mr. Claskey yesterday; involvement through farm organizations so that rural people, farm people, have an input into farm planning. The small groups, grass roots involvement type of participation need to be encouraged. The problem of communication has already been mentioned, but there are problems in establishing a meaning role for farmer involvement. Sometimes urbanites are not fully appreciative of the importance of agriculture. Sometimes farmers don't like to commit themselves to zoning or even to finding out to what extent they might make a meaningful input into zoning because they don't want to commit themselves about something which they know little about. It seems then that the present system is not adequate, that farmers and their lands are considered the residue in many of the plans and that consequently we have to seek ways and means by which this can be altered. One of the ways which has been suggested is to somehow simplify the plan so that plans are not written in the official language of the planners which we might call "Plannee" so that you need an interpreter in order to find out what the plans are really saying. Perhaps this means that model plans for municipalities, additional guidelines for predominately rural municipalities or regions, need

to be developed so that the understanding of the broad objectives of planning are more fully understood by farm people, and therefore, they can make a real commitment into it. I think sometimes we feel that by the time a draft plan is formulated that it is too late to make an input into it, or that individual comment on it is not appropriate. For example, in the Regional Municipality of Niagara a draft plan was completed and published very recently. This will now be the subject of considerable debate going on through a good part of 1973, and it seems that here then is a real opportunity for farmers and farm organizations to make an input into that plan so that what they feel are their rights and what they would like to see incorporated into the plan are in fact made known to those in the municipalities, the government and the planners before it is finally adopted. So that we need a broader appreciation of the fact that these are not law as soon as the draft plan is formulated. A group talked about the various kinds of control systems which might be involved in regulating land use that were indicated for example, assessment and zoning seemed to be the changes which were most acceptable. Development rights, land purchase although receiving some support within the group were of lesser significance as a means of controlling land. Purchase of land of course would be mainly for priority areas such as the recreational uses which we might put land to. But certainly this whole matter of compensation is one which is going to be the subject of continuing comment and debate. I agree with Dr. Tossell that the reaction seemed to be on where you lived, how far ahead development value might occur and how imminent an increase in the

value of land for development purposes might be. Certainly these are areas that we have to take a look at.

To sum up, it seems to me that everyone agrees, and I must say that I was trying to listen most to the farmer participants and the local politicians. They seem to agree that the need is here to do something, that no longer can farm people ignore the possibility of regulations or guidelines on land use. Sure there are advantages and there are disadvantages. There are costs and there are benefits. Farmers have to be on the ball or they are going to be the losers by default. Planners must look increasingly to farmers and farm organizations for their additional input. The big question unresolved seems to be who will decide what, what will it cost, and who will bear the cost, these remain unresolved. I don't think that the people in the group that I was covering are going away with the idea that they can stop their involvement here. A number of them I heard comment that they didn't realize planning was as imminent as it is; they didn't realize all the factors which were involved and now they recognize that we have to do something about it. What that something is of course, depends on individual and group initiative. It seems to me that the people were saying that they appreciated this opportunity for involvement for continuing debate and for participation. I think they're saying not that we necessarily have a lack of faith in the politicians, but we want to make sure that the politicians recognize what we have to say. So that, perhaps there has been the odd feeling that they haven't resolved a great deal, but certainly getting their thoughts and opinions out into the open for continuing debate and action was a very important first step.

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